









Left: Marise Maas, *Seeing More I*, 2005. Oil on canvas, 55 x 110cm.  
Right: Marise Maas, *Traf & Sniff*, 2005. Oil on canvas, 55 x 110cm.  
COURTESY: FLINDERS LANE GALLERY.

by the artwork done by friends and family members on walls and windows of shops." Maas finds these rough and ready images beguiling.

Her earlier works were obsessive renderings of things she would find in her immediate environment, whether they were lampshades, insects, fruit, instruments, cars or objects from domestic scenes.

Being an artist, she readily admits, is a self-indulgent affair, but two events have seen her work shift dramatically.

Having had a child, her son **Tom**, she suddenly had responsibilities she hadn't so much as contemplated beforehand.

"It's really about that moment of freedom when you lose yourself," she says of painting now. It is the only time, she says, that now as a mother, she can ever "get in my own head, when you can forget yourself a little bit."

But it is not, of course, that simple. There has been another alongside her in the studio the whole time she has produced this body of work. Maas has a photograph of her sister **Tjaarke**



Marise Maas, *Rugs*, 2005. Oil on canvas, 130 x 130cm. COURTESY: FLINDERS LANE GALLERY.

Maas works on up to 10 canvases at a time. She likes to start by applying paint without thought or plan.

pinned to the wall. She is a stunningly beautiful young lady, but one who in life was tortured with the demon condition of bi-polar disorder.

In 2004, Tjaarke disappeared in Italy. Maas said that she "knew" something was wrong. It transpired that she had leapt from a cliff, arms akimbo, "like a bird," Maas says.

Tjaarke was also a painter, and had a fascination for pigeons – usually dead – as a subject for drawing. The problem was, Maas says, that she was rather tardy in throwing them out when she was finished and decomposing pigeons tended to be a feature in her somewhat eccentric sister's studio.

Tjaarke hadn't lived in Australia since she was 17 and the last six years of her life she lived in Fiesole just outside Florence. "She jumped in Assisi by the way, bloody St. Francis ... It always felt unfair that she was bipolar. But she was of course so much more than that. She was definitely a much better painter than I'll ever be..."

"I think when I was painting at that time I often felt like I was doing it all for her."

Maas's own bird pictures are darkly gothic affairs. Rather than pigeons she paints the shadowy forms of crows. More so than most of her work they are deeply brooding iconographic affairs.

Maas works on up to 10 canvases at a time. She likes to start by applying paint without thought or plan. "Naturally there are a lot of mistakes doing it this way," she admits. "But I usually end up the happiest with the mistakes. I could finish an entire painting and then spot the accident and have to rebuild the painting around the mistake." ■

New works by Marise Maas will be exhibited at Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne from 4 to 29 April 2006.